

Drouth news has reached as far as the London Times. I suppose newspapers in Bangkok and New Delhi are running feature stories every issue about the dry spell. It seems like that every reporter who had a ball point and camera has been by to gather a drouth story.

Thirty nine Texas counties and 20 Oklahoma ones have been declared eligible for drouth aid. Our outfit lacked a mile of being in the official disaster area. The boss used to say that it could be raining soup and we would be caught out in it with nothing but a fork to eat with. Who would have ever thought that a county line could cause so much bad luck?

I sort of suspected when our home country's wool incentive checks were a day late that the government was discriminating against us. Some of my compadres in the neighboring counties had their checks converted into paid up feed bills before ours hit the post office. However, I didn't want to start a ruckus over the delay. Times are so sensitive to equal opportunity and equal rights that unless a fellow is inclined to have civil liberty groups supporting his cause, he'd better keep his mouth shut.

The Wall Street Journal had a couple of reporters down here 10 days ago. Two ranchers in the county were lucky enough to get to talk to them. One of the herders put forth a story that'd make the autobiography of the Poor Little Match Girl sound like the memoirs of one of the Kennedy sisters.

Goat Whiskers the Younger, my neighbor, called in the night to read the article over the telephone. Young Whiskers said that he'd been too busy pouring out feed to get the drouth in the proper perspective. He said he was glad the reporters didn't interview him or he might have given them a feedlot report.

After a sleepless night, I decided that the first thing I'd better do was to call my banker before he got all excited about the article. You know how jugkeepers are when it comes to the Wall Street Journal. They don't miss an issue except those that announce a cut in interest rates.

By the time the operator had put through the call, it was too late. I tried to tell him that all us would-be writers knew that the eastern newspapers were always just looking for a chance to smear the Shortgrass Country. I asked him to believe the inside stories that his customers told him when they came in to sign notes of credit, and to ignore the slander that comes of the hateful pens of outsiders.

He said that if that was the truth, then what about what the article in the Journal said about thin cattle stumbling off the trucks at the market places.

That was easy to answer. Shortgrass cattle never have trucked well. When grass is dragging on our spur rowels, our cattle get motion sickness. Any truck driver in the country can tell you that lots of these old rangeland sisters can't ride five miles without getting dizzy as a blonde beauty operator. I imagine those big shot reporters probably saw a few old cows that were car sick and thought they were weak from lack of feed.

Surely the loan committee isn't going to be taken in by a couple of eastern pundits who aren't stock wise enough to score in an unblindfolded game of pin the donkey's tail. Men that smart aren't going to be hoodwinked by hombres who can't tell a case of bovine vertigo from drouth fever. The reporters may be handier with ink than an ocean squid, but that doesn't mean that they can fool a Shortgrass banker. A lot of business they have coming down here to cover a drouth in the first place! Privacy in which to suffer is getting harder to come by all the time.